Creatives in China won’t find this flag on Adobe, Getty or Shutterstock

Certain stock images can’t be seen in the People’s Republic – and Shutterstock talent aren’t happy.

When stock imagery makes the headlines, it’s often for innocuous and trivial reasons – bar late last year, perhaps, when Venezuelan Adobe users were told access to its Creative Cloud and

The issue of how far American internet giants should acquiesce to Chinese demands has been long been a hot button issue though, the flames fanned by last year’s Hong Kong protests. It should come as no surprise to creatives to learn the stock giants of Adobe, Getty and Shutterstock are equally embroiled in the debate.

This hottest of potatoes came highlighted by NBC in a report this week that from the Chinese government to censor certain searches for its citizens.

Politically sensitive terms such as ‘Chairman Mao,’ ‘Taiwan flag,’ and ‘yellow umbrella’ will yield no images for users of social network ZCool, Shutterstock’s exclusive distributor in China.

The NBC report also found that searching for an image of the Taiwanese flag brings up no Adobe Stock images in China, and no Getty stock images through its local partner company of VCG.

You won’t see Shutterstock images like these in China (image: screenshot of Shutterstock.cn)

The censorship hasn’t gone down well with some Shutterstock engineers, who’ve been pressing management on fear this will set a precedent for censorship in the corporation; that there were no internal discussions before the decision was made has worried many.

The response from Shutterstock COO Stan Pavlovsky was rather blunt, stating the disgruntled should find new jobs if they weren’t happy. The remark signifies the company’s lack of movement on the issue, and a refusal to comment by Adobe and Getty spokespersons on their own censorship would imply a similar thinking.

Such business decisions present a stifling of resources for

creatives in China and those from outside of the country looking to sell imagery in the republic. Stock image users elsewhere should also pause for thought on the precedent this sets for what they’re allowed to see and purchase in future.

With simply in order to hide one player’s support for Hong Kong protestors, those fears wouldn’t be so unfounded.

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